

# Blurring the Boundary between Humans and Consumption Objects: Dehumanizing Consequences of Anthropomorphism

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## **Abstract**

Anthropomorphism is a natural human process that is typically considered benign and often encouraged by marketers as it can have facilitative effects. In this research, we consider a potential dark side to this tendency and investigate whether anthropomorphism facilitates the inverse process of denying human characteristics to other humans. Across four studies, we show that the tendency to anthropomorphize is positively correlated with a tendency to dehumanize other individuals and support for dehumanizing policies, and that the use of consumer technological devices with humanlike characteristics is associated both with increased anthropomorphism and increased dehumanization. Furthermore, interacting with humanlike objects increases various forms of dehumanization (e.g., denying secondary emotions to other individuals). Finally, we identify theoretically relevant boundary conditions of the observed effect in a service consumption context and draw marketing implications.

**Keywords:** *Anthropomorphism; Technology; Dehumanization*

**Track:** Consumer Behaviour